

Braley Opening Statement at Energy and Commerce Hearing on American Clean Energy and Security Act

Rep. Braley gave the following statement at today's Energy and Commerce hearing on a proposed climate change bill.

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) made the following opening statement at a hearing of the Energy and Commerce Committee on the American Clean Energy and Security (ACES) Act. The ACES Act is a major piece of legislation that will invest in clean, renewable energy, create jobs, and reduce America's output of carbon emissions:

"Thank you Chairman Markey.

"I commend you for your efforts on the American Clean Energy and Security Act. Addressing climate change and energy independence are two of the greatest challenges facing us. I know it's taken a lot of work and consensus to try to come up with language that balances the needs of people and businesses, but the discussion draft is a great start. I am pleased that you have brought so many people to the table from diverse industries and interest groups to put together this legislation.

"This year I was proud to form the Populist Caucus, the only caucus in Congress devoted solely towards addressing middle class economic issues. I can take this bill back to caucus members and tell them that there are provisions in here that will help working class Americans.

"I am encouraged by several provisions included within this draft to promote green jobs. This bill should be seen as an opportunity to put in place a green industry within the United States. We should take advantage of our world-class education system to make sure we have adequately trained workers for careers in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate change mitigation, and the grant program that is a part of this bill will be a good step towards accomplishing these goals.

"Tomorrow, President Obama will be in Newton, Iowa-where I got my first driver's license when I was 16-to discuss the importance of this legislation to economic revitalization. For over 100 years, Newton was the world headquarters of Maytag Corporation, a world leader in home appliances like washers and dryers. When Maytag shut down its Newton facility, some of my high school classmates lost their jobs. Now that facility is putting Iowans to work building wind turbine components to meet the growing demands for wind energy in Iowa, the US, and the world.

"There is no technology silver bullet, but I am proud that Iowa is now second in the nation in wind generation. Iowa's success story is further evidence that investment in renewable energy is working. Iowa is home to six wind manufacturing companies representing thousands of green collar jobs and an investment of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in our state. Iowa surpassed California and now has the installed capacity of over 2,700 MW. This amount of wind generation will provide about 18% of Iowa's total electricity needs.

"We can all benefit from investments in wind energy and other renewables through newly created jobs and industries, cheaper energy, cleaner skies, and a reduced dependence on foreign oil.

"One of the things I would like to see as a part of this bill is an allowance allocation for renewable energy deployment. I have been working with different renewable energy groups to discuss a subsidy matrix that takes into account distributed generation vs. centralized generation and mature technologies vs. emerging technologies. I hope that we'll soon have some language that the Committee will consider as part of the base language. I believe that this type of approach will bring new technologies to the market faster and ensure that effective technologies have the resources they need to expand.

"I also think it would be helpful to have an expansion of the Temporary Program for the Rapid Deployment of Renewable Energy and Electric Transmission Projects. The program, modeled after the Department of Energy's Loan Guarantee Program, is designed to speed commercial adoption and use of advanced renewable energy technologies by providing low interest, government-backed loans to companies investing in implementation of the technologies, including advanced biofuels technologies. The stimulus program expires on September 30, 2011.

"I'm glad there's language in place that will help low- and middle-income Americans lower their energy costs like money for weatherization of houses. I'm also hopeful there will be additional protections for working-class Americans as a part of this legislation. I want to ensure that there is some kind of mechanism in place to provide rebates to low- and middle-income Americans to help balance their energy costs. Additional protections, such as Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) money, would also be welcomed.

"It is also encouraging that energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries are given special consideration under this legislation. The last thing any of us want to happen is for energy-intensive industries to move overseas to avoid regulations implemented as a part of this bill. The provisions for these industries will provide better safeguards for keeping manufacturing jobs in the United States and will ultimately result in lower carbon emissions, as opposed to these factories going to places where they receive little incentive to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

"I'm also glad there is a requirement for a report to set forth a unified and comprehensive strategy to address the key legal and regulatory barriers for the commercial-scale deployment of carbon capture and sequestration. The reality is that we use a lot of coal that isn't easily replaceable, especially over the short-term, and carbon capture and sequestration needs to be looked at to see the potential for reducing the amount of carbon that goes into the air.

"According to this legislation, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to write regulations for certifying, maintaining, and trading offsets. I hope they'll see the benefits that farmers can provide in reducing carbon emissions and include things such as methane digesters and no-till farming in this list.

"The energy revolution has begun. We need your help to make it a reality."